

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6400

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT: THE INTERIM AGREEMENT- ONE MONTH LATER

BEGIN SUMMARY: SINCE CONCLUSION OF SECRETARY'S SHUTTLE MISSION ISRALI SUPPORT FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT HAS STRENGTHENED. LEADERSHIP HAS CONTINUED INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO EXPLAIN BENEFITS OF SINAI II, STRESSING PROSPECTS FOR NEW, MORE POSITIVE PHASE IN EGYPTIAN/ ISRAELI RELATONS AND REBUILDING OF U.S./ ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AFTER SHARP TENSIONS EARLIER THIS YEAR. ATTACKS OF RADICAL ARAB STAES, SOVIETS AND PLO ON EGYPT FOR CONCLUDING INTERIM AGREEMENT ARE READ HERE AS VINDICATIONS OF RABIN'S POLITIAL STRATEGY. MILITARY LEADERSHIP HAS EMPHASIZED THAT IDF WILL REMAIN FULLY CAPABLE OF DEFENDING COUNTRY'S POPULATED CENTERS AND THAT NEW ARRANEGMENTS ALSOWILL CONTRIBUTE TO FUTHER STABILIZATION IN SINAI. FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, KEY QUESTIONS NOW ARE WHETHER SADAT WILL BE ABLE TO FULFILL

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TERMS OF AGREEMENT SHOULD ARAB OPPOSTION CONTNUE A

ITS PRESENT INTENSITY AND WHETHER PRESENT RIFTS IN ARAB WORLD ARE ONLY SHORT-TERM OR PORTEND DEEPER SHIFTS IN INTRA-ARAB AND EGYPTAIN-SOVIET RELATIONS, AS DOMESTIC TURMOIL OVER SINAI II DIMINISHES, POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS ARE ALREADY GIRDING FOR POSSIBLE NEW POLITICAL SHOWDOWN OVER GOLAN HEIGHTS. THERE IS BROAD EXPECTATION THAT, DESPITE RECENT GOVERNMENT CLARIFICATIONS AND HARD LINE EMANATING FROM DAMASCUS, NEW ROUND OF SYRIAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS MAY SOON CONFRONT GOI WITH EVEN TIGHTER POLITICAL CHALLENGE THAN SINAI II. END SUMMARY.

1. INTENSE SUMMER OF NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO ACHIEVEMENT OF SINAI II INTERIM AGREEMENT HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY PERIOD OF RELATIVE CALM, ENABLING ISRAELIS TO TAKE HARD LOOK AT WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING. FUNDAMENTAL DIVISION BETWEEN MODERATE PRAGMATISTS AND CHAUVINISTIC NATIONALISTS WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED ISRAELI DEBATE ON NEGOTIATIONS SINCE OCTOBER 1973 WAR (AND BEFORE) CONTINUES. NONETHELESS OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT MOST ISRAELIS, WHILE SKEPTICAL AND INCLINED TO FEAR THE WORST FROM ARABS, REGARD SINAI II ON BALANCE AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT.

2. NEGOTIATION TEAM--RABIN, PERS, AND ALLON--HAS TAKEN LEAD IN EMPHASIZING TO PUBLIC, IN SERIES OF APPEARANCES AND INTERVIEWS, SINAI II'S ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS. MAIN THEMES HAVE BEEN OPENING OF NEW CHAPTER IN EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS AND PRESERVATION OF CLOSE, EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH U.S.

3. IN ASSESSING PROSPECTS FOR EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS, RABIN REPEATEDLY HAS STRESSED THAT INTERIM AGREEMENT REPRESENTS SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH--" A VERY HOPEFUL EVENT." HE HAS PRAISED SADAT'S " REALISTIC APPROACH" IN SIGNING AGREEMENT WITHOUT EXPLICIT LINKAGE TO OTHER FRONTS, AND BY SO DOING INCREASING PROSPECTS FOR OVERALL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HER ARAB NEIGHBORS. RABIN FURTHER HAS EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF FACT THAT EGYPT HAS ENTERED INTO OPEN AGREEMENT RENOUNCING USE OF FORCE AND EXPRESSING READINESS TO REACH FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. ALLON, IN REBUTTING CHARGE THAT

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ALL CONCESSIONS HAD COME FROM ISRAEL, TOLD INTERVIEWER THAT SINAI II WAS TWO-WAY POLITICAL COMPROMISE, AND CONTRASTED ITS CONTENT TO 1967 KHARTOUM CONFERENCE'S " THREE NOES" TO UNDERSCORE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE WHICH EGYPT HAS TRAVELED SINCE THEN. IT SEEMS THAT AT LEAST PART OF PUBLIC REALIZES, HOWEVER HESITANTLY, THAT SADAT HAS ALSO TAKEN RISKS. ISRAELI MEDIA HAS HIGHLIGHTED SADAT'S VIGOROUS DEFENSE OF INTERIM AGREEMENT

AGAINSTARAB AND SOVIET CRITICISM, AND GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS. RECENT SAILING OF GREEK CRUISE SHIP FROM ALEXANDRIA TO ASHDOD ALSO GO NOTICE AS FAVORABLE SIGN. FROM ISRAELI VIEWPOINT, A MUCH BIGGER STEP OF COURSE WILL BE TAKEN WHEN FIRST ISRAELI CARGO PASSES THROUGH SUEZ CANAL.

4. ISRAELI LEADERSHIP ATTACHES MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO ROLE OF SINAI II IN REBUILDING U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP. WITHOUT ILLUSIONS, LEADERSHIP IS AWARE OF ISRAEL'S CONSIDERABLE DEPENDENCE ON U.S. FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPORT. INEVITABLY, FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, THIS DEPENDENCY IS UNCOMFORTABLE AND EVEN DISTURBING. AS IF TO MINIMIZE ITS REALITY, GOVERNMENT REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZES THAT FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS ARE MADE ON BASIS OF ITS OWN INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT OF WHAT CONSTITUTES ISRAELI NATIONAL INTERESTS. NONETHELESS, GOI REMAINS DEEPLY AWARE OF CONSTRAINTS ON ITS POLITICAL OPTIONS.

5. NEW ADMINISTRATION COMMITMENTS REGARDING POLITICAL CONSULATION AS WELL AS FOR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF ISRAELI'S ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID REQUEST ARE FOUNDATION FOR GOI SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PLANNING. AS A RESULT, ISRAELIS ARE HIGHLY ATTENTIVE TO EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS FOR ANY SIGN OF "EROSION" IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE COMMITMENTS (FLAP OVER PERSHING MISSILES IS CASE IN POINT). PRESS COMMENTARIES IN SEPTEMBER FOCUSED ON REPORTS THAT SOME MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND U.S. JOURNALISTS BELIEVE ISRAEL EXTRACTED TOO HIGH A PRICE FROM USG, NET EFFECT OF WHICH WILL BE TO STRENGTHEN ISRAELI "INTRANSIGENCE" ON OTHER ISSUES. CONFIDENTIAL

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ISRAELI JOURNALISTS IN WASHINGTON ALSO HAVE IGNITED CONVERNS ABOUT ALLEGED PLANS FOR U.S. ARMS SALES TO EGYPT IN 1977-79.

6. GOI DECISION TO WITHHOLD FINAL SIGNATURE OF MILITARY PROTOCOL UNTIL AFTER CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR DISPATCH OF U.S. TECHNICIANS TO SINAI HAS FURTHER UNDERSCORED CENTRALITY OF U.S. ROLE. INDEED, GOI HAS PRESENTED U.S. TECHNICIANS TO ISRAELI PUBLIC AS LYNCHPIN FOR GUARANTEEING THE STABILITY OF ENTIRE AGREEMENT. MANY ISRAELIS ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS MAY BECOME PRECEDENT FOR SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT ON GOLAN, IN TURN ALIENATING PRO-ISRAELI ELEMENTS IN CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PUBLIC DISINCLINED TO ACCEPT EXTENSIVE NEW COMMITMENTS IN POST-VIETNAM PERIOD.

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7. ISRAELI MILITARY TAKE POSITIVE VIEW OF SINAI II. CHIEF OF STAFF AND SENIOR COMMAND OFFICERS HAVE TOLD ISRAELI PUBLIC THAT ON-THE-GROUND ARRANGEMENTS GIVE IDF BETTER DEFENSIVE POSITION. THEY HAVE STRESSED THAT DEEPENING AND ENLARGEMENT OF BUFFER ZONE AND INTRODUCTOION OF U.S. TECHNICIANS REDUCE CHANCE OF SURPRISE ATTACK AND THUS CONTRIBUTE TO STABILITY OF AREA. IDF BELIEVES THAT IT CAN MAINTAIN NEW, LONGER DEFENSE LINE WITH SAME AMOUNT OF MANPOWER. AS PART OF POST OCTOBER WAR REASSESSMENT, IDF IN ANY CASE IS MOVING TO STRATEGIC DOCTRINE BASED LESS ON FIXED DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND MORE ON MOBILITY. KEY ELEMENTS NOW ARE SEEN AS TECHNOLOGICAL STRENGTHENING THROUGH U.S. MILITARY AID AND UTILIZATION OF NEXT YEARS (ASSUMING INTERIM AGREEMENT HOLDS) FOR TRAINING AND MODERNIZATION. ON PUBLIC LEVEL, MAIN MILITARY CRITIC REMAINS PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISOR ARIK SHARON WHO--ASIDE FROM HIS OBJECTIONS TO RELINQUISHING OIL FIELDS AND PASSES--CHARGES THAT IDF HAS GIVEN UP ITS OFFENSIVE OPTION.

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8. AS FAR AS WE CAN JUDGE, MOST MEMBERS OF LABOR ALIGNMENT HAVE MOVED, IN LAST MONTH, FROM QUALIFIED SUPPORT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT TO CONVICTION THAT RABIN'S STRATEGY HAS VINDICATED ITSELF. SEVERAL LABOR PARTY MK'S HAVE EMPHASIZED TO US THEIR SURPRISE AT INTENSITY OF ATTACK BY RADICAL ARAB STATES AND PLO ON SADAT. THEY BELIEVE THAT SADAT, IN DEFENDING HIS POLICY, HAS GONE FURTHER IN ARTICULATING DE-FACTO ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL THAN HE HAD INTENDED. THERE IS GROWING OPTIMISM IN LABOR ALIGNMENT CAMP THAT INTRA-ARAB QUARREL, AND SHIFT OF EGYPT FROM SOVIET TO U.S. CAMP, MAY REDOUND TO ISRAEL'S BENEFIT BY STRENGTHENING AND EVEN ACCELERATING SADAT'S COMMITMENT TO MODERATE POLICY. IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT INTRA-ARAB CONFLICT IS GENERALLY SEEN HERE AS TAKING THE HEAT OFF ISRAEL, AND FOCUSING INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON INSTABILITY OF ARAB WORLD.

9. KIKUD, NRP YOUTH WING AND DAYAN CONTINUE TO ASSERT THAT SINAI II IS DETRIMENTAL TO ISRAELI SECURITY INTERESTS. HARDLINERS ARGUE THAT SADAT HAS CHANGED TACTICS BUT NOT STRATEGY, AND WOULD NOT FOREGO OPPORTUNITY TO DESTROY ISRAEL IF HE COULD. LESS EXTREME, BUT STILL NEGATIVE, VIEW IS THAT AGREEMENT MAY HOLD, BUT THAT ISRAEL GAVE UP PASSES AND OIL FIELDS WITHOUT RECEIVING NON-BELLIGERENCY COMMITMENT, FORFEITING ITS BEST BARGAINING CHIPS. OPPOSITION ALSO CLAIMS THAT ISRAEL COULD HAVE GOTTEN ALMOST AS MUCH U.S. AID WITHOUT AGREEMENT. SOME LIBERAL MK'S AND TEL AVIV MAYOR LAHAT SUPPORT AGREEMENT, MORE OR LESS OPENLY, BUT THEIR VIEWS HAVE HAD LITTLE DISCERNIBLE IMPACT ON THEIR LIKUD COLLEAGUES.

10. FOR ISRAELIS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS, KEY QUESTION IS WHETHER SADAT WILL BE ABLE IN LONG RUN TO HONOR AGREEMENT SHOULD OPPOSITION FROM RADICAL ARAB STATES AND PLO CONTINUE. ISRAELIS ARE FEARFUL THAT ASAD HAS CAPABILITY TO DRAW SADAT, HOWEVER UNWILLINGLY, INTO RENEWED HOSTILITIES. THESE CONSIDERATIONS CAST A SHADOW ON THE GENERALLY POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT; AT THIS STAGE PERHAPS ALL THAT CAN BE SAID WITH CONFIDENCE IS THAT ISRAELIS HAVE NOT REACHED ANY HARD AND FAST CON-

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CLUSIONS.

11. ISRAELIS ARE SKEPTICAL WHETHER EGYPT HAS PASSED DEFINITELY INTO WESTERN CAMP. THEY RECALL THAT THEY MISJUDGED EXPLUSION OF SOVIETS FROM EGYPT IN 1972, SETTING STAGE FOR UNDERESTIMATING SOVIET ROLE IN EGYPT IN 1973. MOREOVER, THEY ARE AMBIVALENT AS TO WHETHER EGYPTIAN SHIFT OT WESTERN CAMP IS WHOLLY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR THEM, FEARING THAT U.S. SUPPORT FOR EGYPT MAY COME AT ISRAEL'S EXPENSE.

2. WHILE ISRAELI/EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATORS THRASHED OUT MILITARY PROTOCOL AT GENEVA, GOI ALREADY HAS BEEN FORCED TO CONSIDER ISSUE OF POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA. REACTING TO PRESS "LEAKS" RE SECRETARY'S ALLEGED VIEWS ON NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS, GOI HAS TRIED TO REASSURE ANXIOUS ISRAELI PBULIC THAT IT HAS MADE NO COMMITMENTS TO USG RE WITHDRAWALS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS AND THAT NO DECISIONS HAVE YET BEEN MADE RE NEGOTIATING MODALITIES, FORUM OR TIMING.

13. DESPITE TOUGH STATEMENTS AGAINST NEGOTIATIONS COMING FROM DAMASCUS, THERE IS WIDESPREAD VIEW THAT SECRETARY IN NEAR FUTURE WILL UNDERTAKE EXPLORATIONS FOR SYRIAN"ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS, SYRIA WILL CHANGE ITS TUNE, AND THAT IN DUE COURSE U.S. WILL PRESENT GOI WITH SOME HARD AND PAINFUL CHOICES. THUS, EVEN AS THE DOMESTIC CONTROVERSY OVER SINAI II SUBSIDES, MINISTERS, PARTIES AND INTERESTED GROUPS (GOLAN HEIGHTS SETTLERS, GUSH EMUNIM, ETC.) ALREADY ARE STAKING OUT THEIR POSITIONS FOR POLITICAL SHOWDOWN OVER THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. FOR SOME, THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE HEIGHTS LOOMS AS THE LARGEST PROBLEM. FOR OTHERS, EMPHASIS IS ON THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SETTLEMENTS. FROM EITHER PERSPECTIVE, ISRAELIS ARE CONVINCED THAT A DIFFICULT PERIOD LOOMS AHEAD, INVOLVING EITHER A NEW CRISIS IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND/OR A MAJOR TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POWER TO ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY IN MAKING NEW TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS. AS HAS BEEN WIDELY NOTED, ISRAELIS SEE EACH STEP IN THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AS MORE PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT THAN THE PRECEDING ONE. THE PROTRACTED
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PROCESS LEADING UP TO SINAI II, AND THE DOMESTIC FUROR WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE FINAL PHASE, ARE LIKELY PREVIEWS OF WHAT LIE AHEAD.
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